

## The Consistency between Health Fields and Religion in their Approach to Covid-19

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Following the spread of Covid-19, experts in the health sector recognized this virus as a threat to health and human life and announced specialized measures and issued orders for handling this virus. Setting these new rules involves all realms including religion and follows certain limitations in this respect. Besides, the problem of religion following the field of health is not a concern because it is not a religious expert's duty to determine where the religious decrees are applicable and specify and set real-life examples for them as health experts might do this better. In the case of Covid-19, specifying the conditions of protection and preservation of life is the responsibility of the health sector.

Going and referring to the doctors (physicians), as a tradition, for determining and specifying where religious decrees apply, is different from a kind of traditionalism that is an ideological attempt to confront the religious beliefs. However, there are some other issues that require religious experts to make an inference from religious texts and this responsibility is taken by the religious experts and the religion. For example, in the case of euthanasia and dying, a religious expert determines that they are inherently different and they will not be treated in the same way in terms of the religious decrees (1). In the case of Covid-19, not taking into account the responsibilities and duties of each field, some do not accept practical compliance of religion to health. Therefore, a feeling has been created that religion is in confrontation with health. However, there is a need to provide some explanations in this regard.

1. From the beginning years of Islam to the present, religious experts and even Imams (pbuh) referred people to experts. Religious experts also mention at the beginning of their reference book the logical obligation for referring to a knowledgeable person in different issues and consider referring to experts as necessary when there is a logical reason for doing so (2). With regard to human health, undoubtedly physicians and experts in the field of health are responsible for specifying where religious decrees are applicable and determine the related examples to which religious decrees can be applied in the issues related to medicine. The field of health, with its exact and scientific criteria, determines what is needed to be done for protecting one's life, which is considered as specialized custom/tradition. The duties announced by the health sector in relation to Covid-19 are an introduction to achieving the religious decrees in this regard, which will be explained further on.

2. In the area of religion, from the time of Imams to the present, Imamiah (Shia) religious experts have made an attempt to explain the principles that are sometimes applicable to all religious decrees and sometimes to some specific religious decrees. For example in explanation for the self-preservation obligation and the obligation to avoid any likely loss, even the fear of a likely loss and fear of losing one's life is the required condition for making its avoidance a religious obligation. In the case of causing a loss to the body and health, there is no need for certainty or even doubt (3). Therefore, in the case of Covid-19, if the health sector

is not even sure about the likely loss it may cause to human health and just considers the loss as likely, based on the religious principles, it is a requirement to stick to their decision. Since the above-mentioned principles are logical, they are not confined to any particular group and no group or class of people will make an exception in this regard. Finally, in the process of inferring religious obligations based on another principle, i.e., the consistency between logical and religious obligation, religious experts complete the second premise for the argument and conclude that observing the rules and principles related to self-preservation is an absolute requirement of the theoretical reason.

3. In the religion of Islam, particularly the school of Imamah, religious decrees are derived from the Holy Quran, (the Prophet's and Imam's) tradition, agreement (between the Quran and the tradition) and absolute reason. Concerning the issue of Covid-19, there is no doubt in Islam that self-preservation is a religious obligation and the reason for this religious decree is based on the practical reason and also derived from the Quran, tradition and agreement (between the Quran and the tradition) inferred from Imams' statements (pbuh). In other words, in the process of inferring religious decree related to self-preservation and the religious obligation to observe the health protocols, premise one and two of this argument are logical. These types of arguments are referred to as "Mostaghellat- al-Aqlih" or "Independent Reasoning" by the religious experts. These two premises are mentioned in the next section.

The first (small) premise is that "Justice is logically good". In this regard, saving one's life and maintaining health and determining the related principles and rules for preventing destruction of a generation is an exemplification of justice. Accordingly, practical reason is committed to doing it and approves and praises anyone who tries to preserve his/her life and considers them as deserving rewards. It also reproaches anyone acting against it and considers them as deserving of punishment. In the school of Imamah, this logical decree is referred to as "Aray'e Mahmoudeh" or "Favorable Views" or "Matching the elite's views" based on which some form of understanding the expediency or public ruin has been taken into account (4). The responsibility of the health sector is to decide where the religious self-

preservation obligation is applicable and specify its related traditions and methods in confrontation with pandemic viruses such as Covid-19. This is where the first (small) premise is applicable.

In the next phase or the second (big) premise to the argument, theoretical reason comes in to help the instrumental reason and explains the need for consistency between reason and religion meaning that all the wise believe that preserving and maintaining one's life and health is necessary and any action that disrupts it is abominable or forbidden. This logical decree is definitely God's decree because He is the Wise and the head of the wise and the creator of the wise. Accordingly, in the case of saving one's life, if there is a reason mentioned in the Holy Book and the tradition for its being obligatory, guiding and directing others (to preserve their lives) is led by reason and emphasized (5).

The conclusion made from the presented arguments and introductions is that observing the rules related to self-preservation and health is obligated by reason and religion.

Based on the three mentioned phases, religion is the first to take into account the rules and customs of self-preservation because it considers the obligation to observe the rules as obligated by both reason and religion. In the well-known hadith of Towhid-e Mofazzal (Mofazzal monotheism), Imam Sadeq (pbuh) emphasized following physician's orders and directions by the patient as a clear logical and fixed issue in the mind of the narrator and if his/her orders are not followed, the patient is reproached (6). Furthermore, the lifestyle of Imam Khomeini is a real example and model for us. Besides following physicians' orders and directions, he also advised others to do so. For instance, in a letter to his brother, he emphasized the need to carry out physicians' orders. He also emphasized sanctity of medical jobs (i.e., physician and nurse) and considered doing these jobs as devoutness and a kind of worship (7).

Finally, I would like to request the editor to prepare the ground for further discussions on the lack of contrast between religion and health sectors in the mentioned area so that researchers carry out further strategic and applied research.

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